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Christ's Ministers the People's Servants.

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the

O R D I N A T I O N

O F

Mr. JOHN GREGORY,

A N D

Mr. William Dodge.

A T

Findern in Derbyshire, April 26. 1722.

By E. LATHAM, M.D.V.D.M.

Publish'd at the Request of the Ministers who
heard it.

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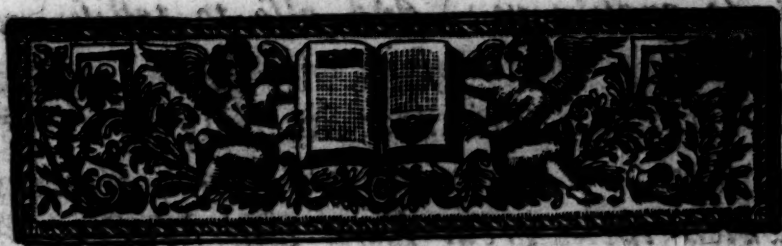
SEERMON

ORDINATION

MR. JOHN GREGORY,

MR. WILLIAM DODGE

Published at the Request of the Ministers who



THE
P R E F A C E
TO THE
R E A D E R.



THE following Sermon, in my Opinion, does not need the greatest Name to recommend it: So I am far from thinking, that the prefixing of mine will be any advantage to it. But since it was at my Request, in the name of my Brethren, that the Publication of it was procur'd; I am willing in this manner, both to return the worthy Author our Thanks for his Compliance herein, which I am fully perswaded, was purely
by

THE PREFACE.

ly to gratify us: And also to testify our joint Approbation of it.

Those who minister in holy Things; if they are contented with such Powers, which their great Lord and Master has entrusted them with, should they happen not to be satisfied, will yet scarce find Cause to be displeas'd.

But then the Laity methinks, can't but feel a secret Pleasure, to find themselves rescued from that spiritual Tyranny, which too many, both from the Pulpit and the Press, have so eagerly attempted to usurp over them.

After all the Arts which have been us'd this way, Men will see a difference betwixt such who behave as Lords over God's Heritage: And such who profess, they have not Dominion over their Faith; this can't but be agreeable to you; and if we be also Helpers of your Joy, we hope in Return, we shall be Sharers in your Prayers for us, who are your Servants for Jesus Sake.

*Derby, May 21.
1722.*

F. SHAW.



2 COR. IV. 5.

*And Our Selves your Servants
for Jesus Sake.*



Tis so natural on these Occasions, to magnify the Office into which we receive the Brethren, that you will not easily, on the first View, apprehend how the low Title of the Servants of the Churches, should do Right to it. But since the great Apostle has made the Term sacred here, and softned all the Dignity of his own Character with it; it must be some Excuse to me, that I choose to place our Office in this Light. Let others, amidst all the Pageantry of worldly Honour, Lord it over the Heritage of God, and contend earnestly for the Rights and Powers of the Clergy; we shall leave the several Orders and Degrees of them to assert their Claims, and only in this Exercise, consider their Work. If our Zeal had spent it self, in the more laborious Parts of this, rather than in Disputes about the Titles and Characters that attend it, we shou'd have had more of the Spirit of Christianity among us, which is of far greater Importance, than all the Accomplishments of Ecclesiastical Heraldry. Let Souls that know not their own Value, waste their Hours, and ruffle their Tempers in their eager Contentions; we have no greater Ambition than to be useful to you; only

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give

give us an Opportunity of saying, *Ye are our Epistle, our Letter of Resommendation*, and the Orders we have will be very legible, very authentick to you, who can't be at a loss to know when we are *your Servants* (from the good Offices we do your Souls) that is, *your Ministers*, according to the Import of the Word: So far you can easily judge of our Character, how much soever you may be confounded with other Titles; and in this you oblige us with a Stile that satisfied Apostles, which must be a sufficient Honour to all that wou'd claim a Succession to them. The Success that attended his Ministrations, was the greatest Consolation to *Paul*, and furnish'd out a fine Triumph to him, *Chap. iii. ver. 14*. And he makes a noble Appeal to the *Corinthians* concerning it thro' the last *Chapter*, in which he represents 'em as the *Seals* of his Office, the *Trophies* of his Preaching: Not that he ascrib'd the *Vertue* of it to himself, but to the Truths he taught, and the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, which in a wondrous manner impress'd them with a Resemblance of him; for they were *changed into the same Likeness, with unveiled Face beholding, as in a Glass, the Glory of the Lord*; so our Saviour is imag'd there, by a Phrase very well known among the *Jews*, and, which always convey'd to them the Idea of their *Jehovah*. 'Tis not to be admir'd therefore, that he says, *We preach not our selves*, i. e. insist not on our own Prerogative, as Lords in these Affairs, as *Grotius* paraphrases the Sentence; or we propose not any private Advantage, according to the Explanation that *Calvin* gives us of it: But we insist on the sole Authority of Jesus Christ the Lord; as to our selves, if we have the Satisfaction of doing you Service, we desire no more. 'Tis a noble Contempt of all the *schismatical Respect*, the *Corinthians* pay'd those who preach'd among them. It is not improbable, they might bring the *Orders* of some of them into the Dispute (if we suppose those who gave the Preference to *Cephas*, to have a greater Esteem of the Validity of his Perform-

Performances, than of *Apollos's* or *Paul's*) which made it very necessary to remind them that they were *Christians*; a Name, that must swallow up every other, and which, as Ointment poured forth, can only heal the Wounds of the Church. Wou'd the Rulers of it once insist less on their own Prerogatives and Powers, and direct the Regards of the People from themselves to him; were the Validity, (I do not say the Regularity) of our Ministrations approv'd by the Success of them, and instead of the Jargon of our Parties, the Characters of sacred Officers, *Bishop, Presbyter, and Deacon*, [Words, that however innocent in themselves, and sacred in the first Use, have been confus'd in their Sense, and almost unhallow'd by our Divisions about 'em] were these explain'd by that of *Servants of the Churches*, we shou'd lose very little of our Light, and might recover much of our Love. I am perswaded you, my Brethren, will come into these Sentiments, and allow me this Position, *That we can't do more Right to our Office, than when we proclaim our selves the Servants of the Churches for the sake of Christ.* I shall

First, Evince the Justice of this Remark.

Secondly, Shew what is imply'd in it.

As for the *Former*.

(1.) Our Reverence for the divine Government, which immediately affects the Souls of Men, is a sufficient Reason why we shou'd keep this Distance from it in our Addresses to them. The holy Writings recommend this Conduct on that Account, and the great Author of our Religion has expressly discharg'd us all the Airs of Grandeur, *Matth. xxiii. 8, 9, 10. Be not ye call'd Rabbi or Masters: 'Tis a fine Censure you have there, on the affected Behaviour of the Jewish Clergy, and the Usurpations they made on the Consciences of Men. It was a known Saying among 'em, That he that salutes his Teacher as he doth another Man, provokes God to depart from Israel: And their Talmud in express Terms*

asserts, *All the Words of our Rabbies are to be receiv'd and believ'd, as the Words of the living God*; In which, I know not whether the *Vanity* or *Profaneness* was more scandalous: It was in effect to substitute the Authority of the *Jewish Rulers* in the Place of God Almighty. You will not admire that so much Impudence encroach'd so far on them at last, as to say, *My Son, attend rather to the Words of the Scribes, than to the Words of the Law*. This lets us into all the Mystery of Wickedness, and is a plain Demonstration, how much the very Life and Soul of Religion suffers by every vile Competition of that kind. 'Tis the Character of that Man of Sin, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is call'd God, *2 Thes. ii. 4. That he, as God, sitteth in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*. From which it appears, the Power is too divine to be alienated from the true God; and upon that Account is the sole Prerogative of Christ, *Acts iii. 22. The Father of these Spirits in Flesh, has the only natural Right to prescribe to the Understanding; he alone can take an Account of it, as he searches the Hearts and Reins, and in Consequence of this rewards or punishes that Part of us, Luke xii. 5. 'Tis high Treason against Heaven to seize this Throne*. The Apostles themselves disclaim it, *Not that we have Dominion over your Faith, 2 Cor. i. 24*. For I can't think our late Criticks, who explain away the common Sense of these Words, and support it from *Theodoret*, do Justice to the Text: They must acknowledge *Chrysostome* places it in the Light, I do, which has the whole Discourse of *Paul* in these Chapters to favour it; and he tells them in the Beginning of this, they only commended themselves to the Consciences of their Hearers, or which is the same Thing, left them Judges, under God, of the Truth of what they said. 'Tis a noble Distance they keep from the Legislative Authority: In every Institution we find them insist on the *Command of Christ, what they had receiv'd of the Lord*; nor was any Thing impos'd, as to which they cou'd not

not say, *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost.* If it wou'd be Arrogance in any now to assume their Place in the Churches, 'tis more, and what wants a Name, to make the Claims they did not: Our Allegiance to the common Lord, and our Devotion to the great Pastor, forbid these Magisterial Pretensions: *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and our selves your Servants for Christ's Sake.* And,

2dly, We esteem it Justice to you, to make no Encroachments on your natural Liberty: We acknowledge your Right to think for your selves, and only say with *Joshua*, in that fine Speech, *Chuse you whom you will serve*, Chap. xxiv. 15. When we have placed Life and Death before you; all we have to wish is, that the Religion of Men were more the Matter of their Election: That they were not deliver'd into it, as they find it *Establisht* in the Country, or receiv'd it from their Fathers, as they do their Names and Estates; it wou'd have a more glorious Effect on their Minds and Manners. To induce you to this, we address you with the Apostle, *1 Cor. x. 15. We speak as to wise Men; judge ye what we say; and commend you as more noble for searching the Scriptures daily; whether those Things are so, Acts xvii. 11.* For there you have a more sure Word of Prophecy, whereunto you do well that you take heed, *2 Pet. i. 19.* These are not the Methods of those who have any Design upon your Priviledges: We have no greater Ambition than to enlarge 'em, and therefore while we recommend our Doctrine, we yet admonish you to stand fast in your Liberty; with this Assurance, that the Son, *the Truth wou'd make you free.* We admit, that he, *that is spiritual, judges all Things; 1 Cor. ii. 15.* and that *if any Man will do his Will, he shall know the Doctrine, John vii. 17.* upon which, we ask you not to believe every Spirit, but to try them, *1 John iv. 1.* and to prove all Things, *1 Thes. v. 21.* The Powers of your Minds are your last Property: To invade them wou'd be the greatest Outrage, and to use you worse than the

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Philistines did *Samson*, who only put out his Eyes to make him a Slave, while they yet left him a Man. But this is an Attempt upon your Nature it self, in order to extinguish the very Candle of the Lord, that which he has lighted up for your Conduct. Accept then, my Brethren, of this Deference to your Judgments, and believe us when we say, *We preach not our selves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and our selves your Servants for Christ's Sake.*

(3.) This humble Character and Conduct is an Argument, we understand our selves; for a Consciousness of our own Imperfections, natural and moral, will never suffer us to be over-assuming. Where there is this Sense, which more remarkably obtains among the best Men, it generally finds or gives the Preheminence to Others; at least it cures us of that Over-fondness for Self, which throws a false Glory on a Person, and to which we owe those Heightnings of Character so common among us, where the Colours laid on are of that kind we call imaginary, such as paint the *Rain-bow*, a Matter no better in it self, than the Vapours exhal'd from Bogs and Dunghills, and which is returning to them; so are the broken Reasonings of a vain Mind, and the various Reflections of its own Light form the pleasing Images of Grandeur and Superiority. Whereas there is a Sobriety of Thought in the Condescensions of your Ministers, an honest Acknowledgement of the like Passions, sometimes with less Command over them, which keeps them clear from Confidence, and Presumption on their Office and Endowments: It is an Argument they have good Sense, and are in their right Minds, which we can't easily think of those, who are over-bearing in their Manners and Claims; for there is the same Extravagance almost in the Connection of their Ideas, as in the case of Madness, where the Persons fancy themselves Kings and Emperors; at least they expose themselves as much by assuming Authority and State, where there is no more room for it, and they can really have no Power: If there is not as
much

much Weakness, there must be more Wickedness, and they know not what Spirit they are of. Thanks be to God, *We have not so learn'd Christ*, nor do we so preach him, as to preach our selves with him; his Cross is what we insist on, and the whole Doctrine of that is to the last degree mortifying. You can expect nothing less, from the Conviction it gives us of our own Defects, than to find us in the Dust at the Feet of our fellow Creatures, while we address them, Examples of the Self-denial we teach, *i. e. Our selves your Servants for Christ's Sake.*

(4.) There is so much Prudence in these Condescensions to the Laity, and they may so happily subserve the Ends of our Ministry, that we can't but preach *our selves your Servants*; this Treatment of you is so well manner'd, so lovely, and of such good Report, that it must advantageously recommend it self to the World, as ill natur'd as this is. It's evident what Opinion the Men of Fashion have of this Conduct, from the mutual Compliments of the Age, with which they gravely abuse one another, and which are but so many Affectations of the Christian Deportment, wherein there is every Thing that is truly great and engaging. We proclaim our selves Friends of Mankind, and willing rather in the Instances we lawfully can, to make a Sacrifice of our own, than to encroach upon their Liberty. 'Tis what we know, the humane Nature is more tender of than any Thing; and when you have that Pledge of our Affection in those Cases, wherein we *become all Things to all Men*, and are secure from any Design upon your Rights, amidst all that good Humour, and these kind Professions of Respect to you, if it is possible by any Means, one wou'd think *our Persons* must become acceptable to you, and *our Doctrine* be recommended by them. We can't do better as Leaders of the Host, than to put off the forbidding Airs of State and Grandeur, as an unweildy cumbersome Thing, that sits not more easy than *Saul's Armour* did

lon *David*, and may be a Weight on our Usefulness. Whereas the Generosity and Goodness of a humble Management, will give us an Interest in the Affections of our People, make a way into their Hearts, and assist our Services. They will depend on the kindest Offices from this Behaviour to them, since there can be none too low or mean for those, who esteem themselves your Servants. That Thought takes off the Point of Honour, the Niceness and Delicacy that hath hindred many a good Action; but it leaves you nothing, you may not expect from us, when you observe us, Patterns of all the Humility we recommend, and exemplifying it in numerous Obligations upon you. Say, what unknown Charms appear in this submissive Way of Address, for, I know nothing better bred than Religion.

In the last place, I would observe to you, that it is all that is practicable in our Ministry, which can receive no Advantage from the Claims of Dominion; for after all, it is not in our Power to execute them: The Use of a Man's Reason is as inseparable as the Principle of Individuation, both in a State of Nature and Society. If he has a Conscience towards God, it can no more be the Property of another than his Senses or Understanding, and he who assumes so far as to dictate to it, might as reasonably oblige him to see black white; for the Sentiments of the Mind are unalterable by any Force. Another may be the external Agent in our stead, (which is the Foundation of civil Power) may personate a Man in a Community, but can never receive his Sensations, think, or reason for him. Which is a plain Demonstration that Ecclesiastical Authority is on a very different Foot, and another sort of Thing than what we call Political. If we have any *Sword*, 'tis that of the *Spirit*, a very harmless Thing to your Bodies, but quick and powerful to the inward Man. As for all the Arts of Violence, we leave them to those who have made the Church a Shambles; the devout Butchers of the Popish Countries, who may make Hypocrites, but can never

never make Christians. After all their Attempts, Religion is a Thing too spiritual to fall under their Government ; it is something in the Heart, where no finite Creature has Access, nor are any equal to a Scepter there : Let us do what we can, God hath form'd us so, that it is not in our Power, or your own, to alter your Apprehensions, and prescribe to your Judgments by Authority : We make a virtue therefore of Necessity, and since we cannot be your *Masters*, we profess our selves the *helpers* of your Faith and Joy, we Preach not our selves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and our selves your Servants for Christ's Sake.

Be in no pain, my Brethren, from what I have said about the Authority of your Ministers. This is yet safe in the import of the Words ; for we have no Powers but for good, or which is the same Thing for your service, a just exercise of which, will leave us possess'd of all the respect an honest Man will care for, and a wise Man will pay. The Persons who fix the Honour on the Office, or rather the Name of a Minister, without any regard to the Management, as some of our very learned Men do, may account for it to themselves, for I cannot ; and when their Zeal for the Rights of the Governours of the Church, as such, reaches so far, as to leave the poor Laity at the Reformation, oblig'd in Conscience, to a dutiful subjection to their Popish Priests, as I apprehend many of them do, I cannot but think it is something like the Determination of *Rabbi Solomon*, on *Deut. xvii. 11*. Thou shalt not depart from the Words of the Wise, tho' they tell thee, thy right Hand is thy left, and thy left the right ; or the plain Dealing of *Bellarmin* in this Assertion, [*De Pontif. Rom. l. 4. c. 5.*] That if the Pope shou'd so far err, as to command the Practice of Vice, and to forbid virtuous Actions, the Church were bound to believe, Vice is good, and Virtue's bad. No my Brethren, we know how to magnify our Office without any such Rant as this, without any Violence to the common

Sense of Mankind; we are very tender of your Rights, while we secure our own, and ask no more of you, than we have first allow'd you, a Judgment of Discretion, that you leave us Masters of our own Actions, or which is the same Thing, the Servants of Christ, as well as you. If we do Justice to both these Relations, and are really his and your Servants, we are more than *your Masters*, are *your Fathers* in him; and while you have the best advantage from our Attendance on you, you can't despise us, but as the Apostle observes in regard of himself, you will receive us *as the Angels of God*, and *if it were possible, wou'd even pluck out your own Eyes, and give them to us*. I do not mean by this, your paying a blind Obedience to every thing we say. 'Tis a Complement we despise the acceptance of, as much as you wou'd resent the Proposal: The inspired Writer intends no more by the Phrase, *Gal. iv. 15.* than the last Instance of Respect, and if for *a good Man one wou'd even dare to die*, what hath not an useful good Minister room to expect one; that acquits himself well of the Duties of his Place; Which leads me

2dly, To enquire what is imply'd in the Character of Servants? What are the good Offices we shou'd do you in this Relation? And here my Brethren, a toilsome Scene of Life opens to us. For,

(1.) We are your Servants in our Preparatory Studies. Miracles are now ceas'd, and we can't expect such a divine *Afflatus*, as the Apostles had, to fill our Minds with all Truth; we are obliged to great Industry in the Pursuit of it. Our first Years were sacred to you, when we painfully treasur'd up Words, and tried the unknown Languages, those in which the sacred Writings, we now explain, were first delivered. The same account we can give, of our mature researches into the other Parts of Literature, and shou'd pronounce Vanity upon all, if it was not for your Service; apart from this, who wou'd go thro' these Fatigues

tigues, and run the hazard of his Temper and his Happiness? I have no doubt, but the good plain Christians among you, go to Heaven with more Peace, and without all that Difficulty. The wise Preacher has told us, *He that increases Knowledge increases Sorrow, that much Study is a weariness to the Flesh, and that of reading many Books there is no End.* But for your Sakes, we go cheerfully thro' the Toil, *-serving our Generation according to the Will of God,* in hopes to fall asleep in Jesus: And if a little learned Dust will not enrich the Clods, we don't expect to lye always there, but to *shine as Stars in the Firmament above.* And

(2.) If you consider us actually engag'd in this Work, 'tis a service that requires vast Application. I have Reason to enter upon the account of it, with this Paraphetick Exclamation, *Who is sufficient for these Things?*

(1.) We are to instruct you by our Doctrine. Under the Law, *the Priests kept Knowledge*; and the Ministers of the Gospel must dispense it: 'Tis expected they serve you as Lights in their several Spheres, and scatter healing Rays around 'em. In our great Master *are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*; from *his fullness we receive*, and distribute to the Churches. The Sermons we Preach to you, are a part of this Service; and how difficult a Work it is to make these continual set Discourses, I find *Chrysostom* admirably describes, (*de Sacred.* l. 4. 5.) He represents the People severe Judges of their Compositions, and of such a delicate Taste, they were inclin'd rather to hear for their Pleasure than their Profit; which added to the Preacher's Labour, who, tho' he was to despise both popular Applause and Censure, yet it was the Opinion of that Father, he ought to have such a Regard for his Auditors, that they might hear him with some Satisfaction and Advantage, or at least without Prejudice: But the manner of those Addresses we make you, is of little

Importance, in Regard of that, which is to be the Subject of them, the great Truths of natural and reveal'd Religion; to give you Convictions of the divine Being, and of all his Perfections and Glories; to explain to you his Works and his Words. And what huge Volumes have we here to unfold to you? *The first* of general acceptance, being wrote by the Finger of God in the only universal Language, the beautiful System of Things round you, out of which it is easy to acquaint you with him that made you, and the great Demands he has from you: *The other* given us by inspired Men, who spake and wrote *as they were moved of the Holy Ghost*. To support the Authority of which, it's necessary we shou'd produce to you the Seal of Heaven, shou'd report the Miracles wrought, the Prophecies fulfill'd, that attest the Doctrine; the antient Records of the Heathen and Christian World, which give Credit to the Writings: And after all, we must awaken the Witness within you, the sacred Signatures there, which the Apostle in the Context particularly insists on, and which own the divine Original of these Truths. By this Means we fix your Regard on the Holy Writings, and furnish out to you an Apology for the Revelation there, against the Contempt and Ridicule of it, which is become so fashionable among the polite World. But when we have secur'd their Authority, we have the Sense of those sacred Pages to explain and enforce, which fills our Heads and Hands with new Service. I suggested before, they were wrote in dead Tongues, and that there were some Things hard to be understood in them, which makes it a difficult Work, to lead you into the meaning of the sacred Oracles; and what requires great Accomplishments, and a wide survey of Learning, both divine and humane, to set every Text upon any occasion in a just Light; and to guard it from the Corruptions of Men, and the Errors of every Day; And in doing this, to make you secure of the

right

right Interpretation, we give every Place, by commending what we say so far to your Consciences, as to give you a moral Certainty of it, which supersedes any occasion for the Infallibility of your Guides, in all which, we only acknowledge *our selves your Servants*. For we make you Judges, in the Sight of God, how well we succeed. And what a noble Scheme of Truth have we to lay before you, which leads you into an Acquaintance with your selves, and with your Saviour, with your Misery, and with your Happiness. *We are your Servants*, to shew you the deplored Condition of the human Nature, thro' the Sin of our first Parents, and to give you sensible Conviction of your own Corruption; to bring you then *glad Tidings of great Joy*, and to open the Treasures of Grace, the Mysteries that *Angels prie into*, and Men can't unravel; a God reconciling the World to himself, doing right to all his Excellencies in the Contrivance, and the sacred three executing it; the Father, the *first* in order, forming the Design; the *second*, assuming our Flesh; the *third*, mingling with our Spirits, in order to recover us, to Paint the whole Life of Christ, and the Merit of his Death, to inform you of that wondrous Sacrifice, and the divine Virtue of it; to insist on the Power of his Resurrection, the Glories of his Ascension, the Prevalency of his Intercession, with the Circumstances of his second coming, to Judge the World at the last Day. *We are your Servants*, to do this, and very difficult we find it, to give all these solemn Truths their due weight, and make you sensible of their Influence. But necessity is laid upon us, in this Method, to Preach to you *Repentance and Remission of Sins, to turn you from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan to God*; to make known to you his whole Will, all the holy Habits he expects shou'd be in you, all the Duties he requires from you, and all these diversified, according to your several Circumstances and Relations. We are not only

ly to perform this, but to do it in the Way that is most proper to answer its End, and to be of real Service to you. How stupendous is the Work? It is to breath new Life into those that are *dead in Trespasses and Sins*; to quicken them in the Tombs, where they lie wrapt in the grave Cloaths of the Law, and putrifying in their own Corruption, for so we find 'em represented in the holy Writings. Who is not ready upon this to cry out with *Jer. Chap. 1. Ah Lord, I can't speak* (i. e.) not to those great Purposes; to instruct the Ignorant, reform the Vitious, to reconcile and sanctify Sinners. A very little Knowledge of the World may convince us, how much Difficulty attends this Work, and what a Compass of Service is contain'd in it. We are Servants to you all, being requir'd to *take heed to the whole Flock, to feed the Lambs, to cherish the Young, and confirm the old Disciples; to give every one their Portion, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, administering the Comforts of it to some, the Terrors of it to others, and the Light of it to all.* What a variety of Services, and of what different Complexions? How necessary is it, that those who Minister to you, should be *Sons of Thunder, and of Consolation too*; to shew some their Sins, and others their Saviour, to prick the former at their Hearts, and to heal the Wounds of the latter, to solace the afflicted, and succour the tempted, to disclose the Dangers of some, answer the Doubts of others, and give Peace to all your Minds? How divine is the Office, yet how difficult is the Service? Of how much importance is the Advice to *Timothy? 1 Tim. iv. 13. Give attendance to Reading, to Exhortation, to Doctrine, meditate on these Things, be wholly in them, that thy profiting may appear unto all Men.*

(2.) Another part of our Service, is to lead your Devotions. This is supported by the fine account *Justin* gives us of the Worship in the Primitive Church, in his *second Apology*, where he tells us, he that presided in the

the Assembly, sent up Prayers and Praises according to his Ability: 'Tis not material to determine, whether it describes the Expressions, as of his own Composing, or only intends the life and fervour of them, as some earnestly perswade us. 'Tis certain, you must esteem it a very awful Service we do you, when we are your Orators to the Majesty of Heaven, and go before you in your Addresses and Thanksgiving to him. With what flowing Passions should we pour out your Souls, all the fullness of them, while they hang on our Lips? And with what pure Flames, must our own Hearts like the publick Altars, kindle yours, and make them all burn within you, while you converse with God in the solemn Assembly? Thus we are to assist you in the confession of Sin, and the deprecation of Judgments, as the Ministers of old, who *wept between the Porch and the Altar*, in order to make the Place a *Bochim*; we must Sacrifice every delicate Lust of yours, and form your Vows in the Presence of his Saints, we are to make all your Wants known, as well as all your weaknesses, and strive together with you for the great Supplies of them; how hard is the Work to raise our own Hearts? How much more difficult the Service, to draw up yours with them? To animate this, and the other languid Mind in our Assemblies, and to bring you nearer the Throne, to show you the Face of God, and call your Faults to remembrance, to kindle your repentings before him for every Sin, for all your filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, to unload you of every Care as to your future Conduct, impart your Desires, give away your Fears, ease your Sorrows, that unhinge your Souls from their Center, and help you to plead with him for your selves, and all Saints, the Mercies he hath promis'd, the Graces and Comforts you desire?

(3.) We serve you at the Altar, in dispensing to you the holy Misteries, as the Sacraments of *Baptism* and the *Lords Supper* were call'd in the *Greek Church*. By the,

the *first*, we initiate those, who make a credible Profession of their Faith, and their Off-spring into the fold. By the *other*, we edify the faithful Members of the House, wherein we are Stewards, and give them *Childrens Bread*. You have a claim on these Accounts from us, and we are oblig'd by Office to attend to them, to do right to the sacred Symbols, in administering them with all the simplicity of the first Institution, and all that great Regard to your Edification: And what ought to be the purity of our Hands, and the holiness of our Lips in this Service? With what Care and Respect must we touch so excellent a Work, if we expect to make a Way thro' your Senses to your Hearts, to give those tender movements to your Minds, and work up all those devout Passions, they were design'd to raise and improve?

That we insist on some Qualifications to give you a Right to the Priviledges of this Service, which generally goes under the Name of publick Discipline, and the *Power of the Keys*, I hope you will perceive, is very consistent with the humble Character I assert. It is not possible to do Justice to it otherwise, for by Reason, *He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks Damnation to himself*. We should be far from being your *Servants*, if we contributed to your Suffering. It has been indulg'd even to Slaves, to with-hold the Ponyard and the Dagger from those, who had a full command over them, if they were intended for any unlawful Execution, such as the Murther of a Person's self. Excuse us therefore, that we dare not give the fatal Morsel, or administer the Cup of trembling; for the holy Rites would prove no better in this Case.

'Tis possible we may do you the kindest Office, by this management, from the happy Effects; when there is no civil contempt put on the Person himself, and we shew a tenderness for his better part thro' the whole. And allow me to add, we cannot approve our selves
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the Servants of the other Part of the Society, if we do not execute their Authority over a corrupt scandalous Member; for it is the natural Right of every Community to seclude such. If you apprehend your Liberty may suffer thro' the Exercise of it by introducing humane Articles and Canons; 'tis easy to obviate this, by observing we have no occasion for any of these. 'Tis true, if the interpreting the Rules, which the only absolute Lord hath left, have that Construction with you, as I intimated before, we are yet your Servants in that; for we leave you Judges of our Management, and only desire the Conquest of our own Actions. If you apprehend it possible, that even upon this foot, those who call themselves *Servants* may do a real Injury to their Brother, in not *receiving him whom Christ receives*, I would only suggest, that where this proceeds from a pure Mistake of the Will of their Master, to his *Charity*, we must leave them, which *will cover a Multitude of Faults*, that by reason of humane Frailty, will attend the Management of every Service: Only we make these Conditions for them, that they do not smite and beat their Fellow-servants, either with that rude indecent Language, which is the Scandal of our Nature and Office; or much less by any Acts of Violence; for after all, they *must stand or fall to their own Master*.

(4.) We are yet farther to shew our selves *your Servants*, in our particular personal Addresses to you; that as the old *Catechists* in the Primitive Church, we may in the most familiar way impart Knowledge. And the *Bishops* we are told, in the Epistle under the Name of *Ignatius* to *Polycarp*, were then oblig'd to enquire after all in their Charge by Name, and not proudly to over-look the Man-servants and Maid-servants; and how much would these officious Notices if they were attended with a religious Sympathy, recommend all the other Parts of our Ministry? Our Apostle had some Experience of it when he tells us, 2 *Cor.* xi. 29.

*Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended and I hurt not? What holy Light, Life, and Love, might we diffuse thro' our Congregations, if we made these Religious Visits; not to rifle into the Secrets of Families, or interfere with their secular Concerns, but to enquire into the State of your Minds, to recover you from your Mistakes, resolve your Doubts, and direct your Devotions? For in this Way we are to watch over your Souls, with a peculiar Regard to your distinct Cases, warning every Man from House to House Night and Day with Tears; informing you of your several Duties and Temptations, giving kind Hints of your Weaknesses, directing your whole Conduct, and assisting you faithfully with our Advice and Prayers, in order to soften your Grievs and relieve your Cares. And at last attending your sick Beds, making you ready for your last Hours, till we can give up our dear Charge, your Souls into the Hands of Angels, who are *Ministring Spirits*, and Fellow-servants with us, and who will then do their kind Office when we have finish'd ours. If this were our Behaviour in the Church, cou'd we have any occasion to recommend our Place and Character, it wou'd sufficiently do Honour to it self.*

May 5. Our whole Lives are to be at your *Service*, I may add, our *Deaths* too. It was the Satisfaction of our Apostle, that all the Actions and Events of this State, were sacred to the Design of his Office, and for the edifying of the Churches, 2 Cor. xii. 19. *All Things for your Sakes*, ver. 5. of this Chapter. And if we keep the same Thing always in our View, we can't but approve our selves *the Salt of the Earth*, who are oblig'd by Office to *season* the Inhabitants of it by our Instruction and Example, and to *preserve* their Minds and Manners from Corruption: By this means we may become unto God a sweet Savour of Christ in them that are sav'd, may perfume the World, and spread the richest Odours round us. This will justify a greater Appearance,

ance, and a more open Shew of Sanctity in our Behaviour. That might look like Ostentation and Vanity in others, but must be graceful and becoming in us; as it's suitable to the Service we have upon our Hands, the Reforming of Mankind. Which makes it necessary, we practice with some Applause before them all the Rules of holy Living we give them; as *Patterns of good Works, and Examples to the Flock*. All that we say or do, may have an Influence upon you; and therefore should be directed for your Service; if every Thing is not, (humane Frailties apart) if we are not unexceptionable in our Manners, we cannot with Decency and Freedom attend you in the other Branches of our Work, it will spoil all our Services; upon which account *Chrysostom* [*de Sacerd.* l. 8. c. 2.] represents it a most difficult Province, and what requir'd an Angelical Virtue; his Soul, says he, ought to be purer than the Rays of the Sun, that the holy Spirit may never leave him, but he may always be able to say, *I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me*. And what noble Things are said of some of the Primitive Ministers? That fine Writer, *Minutius Felix*, assures us, they express their Profession not in their Words or Garb, but in the real Vertues of their Soul; they did not talk great, but live well. And many Others of the Fathers, do them Justice in the same Manner. We want not the Testimony of Heathen Writers, among which, that Letter of *Julian* to the *High Priest* of *Galatia*, wherein he propos'd to reform Heathenism on the Christian Morals, it is not the least considerable. He very expressly attributes the Encrease of Christianity to the Sanctity of their Manners who preach'd it, and therefore commands his Officer to take Care that all the Priests of that Region, shou'd be made to answer the same Character: That he shou'd bring them to be diligent sober Men, or remove them from their Office. Happy had it been for our holy Religion, if it had always had the same Advocates, and

the Preachers of it sustain'd the same Character; when they do not do it, it is certain they are no longer your Servants, they are the Pests of the Society, the Scandal of their Name, and the Bane of the Church. *Cyprian* therefore insists on it as the Duty of the People to withdraw from such, because says he, (in his Sixty Eighth Epistle) they have a Right to chuse good Pastors, and reject those who are unworthy: Of how much Importance therefore is it, my Brethren, that we exemplify all the Rules we deliver, and give you a Transcript of your Duty in our Lives? That we animate the Precepts, and make the Graces of our Religion the Object of your Senses? By which Means, they will come with a new Force upon your Minds, and make their Way into your Lives. With these Thoughts about us, we are to conduct ourselves in every Relation and Condition here; every Day polishing the Unevenness in the Temper of our Minds, or the Tenour of our Lives, that every Thing we speak or do, may be amiable in it self, and useful to you. And as we *live* unto Christ and you; we must *die* so too: You are to have our last Hours in the edifying Circumstances of 'em, as much as it is in our Power, that we may shew you the Way into the other World, as well as thro' this; God grant it may be so.

In the *last* Place, It is shew'd in our Care to set apart Others, who may serve you in the same Relation under greater Advantages, when we are no more in the Churches below. 'Tis an *Authority* that is contested, I confess. But if you and these holy Assemblies find it is a *real Service*, we do not doubt the Validity of it; which is all you are immediately concern'd in, and of which you may be the Judges; for as to the Regular part of the Conduct, it depends on that Critical enquiry into the Sense of some Passages, and the Manners of the Primitive Age, that I can never think our Blessed Saviour

Saviour suspends any of your Priviledges on your Acquaintance with these Things. I wou'd only observe, what must give you some Satisfaction in our *Services* of this kind.

That it hath in our Favour been alledg'd in this Controversy, tho' I do not enter into the Merits of it.

That the Government of the *first Church* was left in the Hands of *many*, as appears from the Instance of that at *Jerusalem*.

That your Interests are more safe, the more equally the Powers are distributed. And

That the Unity may be as well preserv'd by the bare Precedence of One for the sake of Order.

That the Ordination of *Timothy* appears to have been Presbyterian, 1 *Tim.* iv. 14.

That the Names of *Bishop* and *Presbyter* are promiscuously us'd thro' the sacred Writings, *Acts* xx. ver. 17, and 28. compar'd, *Tit.* i. ver. 5, and 7, &c.

That the Sacramental Actions allow'd by Presbyters, being esteem'd generally the highest of sacred Performance, there ought to be clear Evidence, they have not all Ministerial Authority in the Church.

I add farther, That the Hierarchical Writers (confuting one another industriously with their particular Schemes to support their Doctrine) leave themselves no Room for those Sanguine Triumphs and Insults upon our common Sense, which some of them have made. For it looks somewhat unreasonable, they shou'd all agree to force on us the Belief of a Thing under the greatest Censures. While they mutually contradict one another in the Reasons of it, and so leave us none at all.

One Party of their Writers found the two Orders on our Saviour's Appointment of the twelve, and afterwards of the seventy Disciples, [Bishop *Taylor*, Dr. *Scot*, &c.] Others of them tell us the former were at first only Deacons, [Hammond] and some, that the latter

latter were no inferiour Order [*Saravia*, Bishop *Stillingfleet*.]

Another Argument they offer is, from the Power of the Apostles, whose Successors they make the Bishops, [*Dr. Hicks, Lesley, &c.*] But then others of them tell us, none of the Apostles had Successors except *Judas*, [*Dodwell, Paran. ad exteros*, p. 68.]

One Proof they bring is, from *James* Bishop of *Jerusalem*, but the violent Contention about the Man, whether he was the Son of *Alpheus*, and one of the twelve, or not, takes away the whole Force of it.

Another Instance they produce is, the Episcopacy of *Timothy* and *Titus*, which they also enervate by their contradictory Reasonings on it. For some of them assert that *Timothy*, e. g. had the sole Power of Ordination [the present Bishop of *Hereford*] and that the Bishops and Presbyters he set apart were the same. Others violently deny it, and assure us, the Term Bishop signifies those we call so. [Bishops, *Pearson, Taylor*] and upon this, some make *Timothy* and *Titus* Arch-Bishops, [*Dr. Hammond, &c.*] And then, if the Arguments of the first Patrons I have mention'd under this Head be allow'd, Arch-Bishops must only have the Power of ordaining.

In short, some of the Leaders in this Controversy, warmly contend there were none of the present Order of Bishops in the New Testament, but that it was instituted about the Year of our Lord 106. [*Dodwell*] Others positively assert, that the second Order, that of Presbyters was not then appointed, [*Hammond*] and Bishop *Burnet* is of that opinion with regard to Deacons.

And can they resent it from us now, that we believe them all when they understand this of their own Establishment? The divine Right of which, by those very

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Arguments they offer for our Conviction, they entirely give up for one another. And only leave it a Creature of the State, or what they love to call the Church. And then we can easily account how the same Authority, which can make full Moons when God doth not in the Heavens, shou'd form Stars of various Magnitudes which he hath not in the Scriptures; at least, such as are very different from those which he who walks in the midst of the Golden Candlesticks, hath in his Right Hand.

All that we have to wish is, that in their *new Heavens*, this most excellent Constitution as they term it, there dwelt more Righteousness and Charity; we shou'd then have a *new Earth* too, at least more Peace on it, and good Will amongst Men.

But when our Fathers and Brethren, have thus mutually destroy'd all the Reasons for their Hierarchy, (one Party of them going about to fix it upon the Ruins of anothers Scheme). Shall it not be forgiven us, that we esteem it very hard, they shou'd all agree to condemn us for not coming into a Church, the Foundation of which, they have undermin'd themselves?

And one won'd think, they might indulge to our Apprehensions, if we can't acquiesce in the Interpretations they give us of some of their Primitive Authorities.

As, *e. g.* When it is said in the Citation I made before, that the Bishop must enquire of all by Name, not over-looking with Contempt the Man-servants or Maid-servants [*ἐξ ὀνόματος πάντας ζήσης δούλους καὶ δούλας μὴ ὑποκρίτους.*] *Ign. Ep. edit. Voss. 2. p. 13.*] That they must do nothing without him, not baptize, [*Οὐκ ἐξόν ἔστιν χρεῖς τῷ Ἐπισκόπῳ ἢ ἐν βαπτίζῃ,* *p. 6.*] or even marry, unless they had obtain'd his Consent, [*ἄρτιται δὲ τοῖς γαμύσι καὶ ταῖς γαμυδαῖς μὴ ἐν γάμῳ τῷ Ἐπισκόπῳ τιλῶνται πειθεῖσθαι,* *p. 13.*] I am perswaded you will not admire that we
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can't understand all this of our Diocesan Constitution, or think that the Sense of such strong Expressions as these is fully answer'd: If the Bishop know the Persons, and do them the Services by Proxy. No! my Brethren, we can't tell how to lodge the Powers necessary for your Edification, in an Officer at such a Distance from you as a Diocesan Bishop, who *in one of our Sees*, is some Thousands of Miles from the Souls they give him the Care off. We form our Notions very much from the Services appointed in the Word of God, and shall hope to approve our selves *Scriptural Officers*, if we are really your *Servants*, of which as I have often suggested, you are very capable to be the Judges. And I don't doubt you will pronounce in our Favour, and have Reason to esteem us so, in such a Solemnity as this, if with Fasting and Prayer, and Imposition of Hands, we set apart those who are themselves the faithful *Servants* of your Souls, who naturally care for them and the Things of Christ; in the Appointment of whom to their Work we have your Approbation and Concurrence; a Thing that was always expected, and insisted on in the Primitive Church, as the Right of the People, and which they struggled so hard to preserve, that all our Writers yield it was very long before they gave it up, or rather suffer'd it to be wrested from them. What we expect is, that we have your Prayers as well, as well as your Presence. We hope we are gather'd in the Name of Christ the great Bishop. And have we not his Promise, that he will be with such? 'Tis all we depend on for the Validity of the present Service.

I shou'd now consider the great Argument that must quicken us to this Service, *For the sake of Christ*, but my Time will only allow me to mention that Point. He is to be the *Subject*, the *Motive* of our Preaching, and all in all to a *Servant* of Souls. And to think those we attend on, are such for whom our great Lord hath
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pour'd out his Blood, and appear'd himself in the Form of a Servant. How willing shou'd it make us, to expend our selves in their Service too? There wou'd be nothing we shou'd not do, and suffer chearfully for them. But let us pause here, and reflect on what hath been offer'd in order to a serious Application of it to our selves. And,

(1.) I'm sensible how much, my Fathers and Brethren in the Ministry, we have occasion to lament our Management. That we have not *serv'd* you with that pious Zeal, Life and Diligence, we shou'd have done. O how poorly have we spoke in the name of the Lord, as holy Mr. *Baxter* said. We can go over the several Particulars of our Service, and drop a Tear on the many Neglects. Let us now amidst the religious Exercises of this Day, humble our selves before God for this. And,

(2.) You whom we serve, can't but join with us in the Humiliation of your selves, that you have not improv'd the *Service* as you ought. Tho' we have beseech'd you in the name of Christ, and pleaded for his sake, with what Coldness and Indifference have you receiv'd the sacred Message? Holding the great Truths in Unrighteousness, and rejecting the Counsels of Heaven against your selves. How many refuse to put away the *Plague* of their own Hearts, the Infidelity and Obduracy of them? How much Reason have we to fear, God shou'd visit us with one upon our Bodies, especially when we hear the Contagion hath not yet spent off it self: 'Tis true in those Places the greatest Superstition, and very little more than the Name of Religion obtains; and what better can be said of the great Formality and Indevotion of those who call themselves *Protestants*? Who attend our *Services* it's true, but on whom they have little Effect, by reason their Hearts seldom engage in them, which is little better than tel-

ling of Beads. No! my Brethren, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* For under what Disadvantages soever we have serv'd you, you have had those who did worthily in their Places: I might remind you of some great Names, and refresh upon your Memory the good Offices of the faithful Servants of your Souls, who now have their Reward, for the Benefit of whose Ministry you are yet to account: If you expect *Service* from those who are now in their Labours, is it necessary I shou'd suggest that your Prayers must attend them?

This Day let us have your most ardent Vows to God for us. And may we my Brethren! in the last place, have our Hands strengthned in our Service, and be enabled to *fulfil our Ministry* to more Advantage. We therefore wait to observe the Marks and Fruits of our Service among you, the Improvements you have receiv'd by it, to see you Masters of your Passions and Pleasures, mortify'd to the World and the Things of it, abounding in every good Word and Work; to find all the blessed Fruits of the Spirit among you, *Love, joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance.* This will be a plain Evidence our Preaching hath been of *service* to you, when you are made better Men your selves, and do more Good in your Neighbourhoods. It is what gave our Apostle a sensible Consolation in the 6th Chap. of his first Epistle: He cou'd testify of the *Corinthians*, that whereas before they were guilty of the vilest Enormities, after the Preaching of these Ministers, the Attendance of these Servants; *they were wash'd, sanctify'd, and justify'd in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God:* And Justin Martyr tells Triphon, the Success of this Doctrine in his Time: That those who had been stain'd with all Filthiness, and enslav'd by Lusts, were by that purify'd and freed, and brought to delight in those Vertues that were most contrary to their former

mer Vices. I shall not add the fine Challenge another of the Fathers, *Tertullian*, makes; in which he stakes the Credit of our holy Religion on its Efficacy to these Purposes.

'Tis certain, my Brethren! *Your Lives* will be the best Apology for *our Work* among you, as well as for your own *Faith*; for it is our Usefulness after all, that will be the most glorious Support of our Character. 'Tis what we insist on. Let us be of service to you, or we are *Nothing* in the Churches.

Become wiser and better every Lord's Day; let it be observ'd in your Families, and the Places where you live, and we ask nothing more to commend our Labours among you. May we chase away the Shades of Ignorance and Prejudice, Vice and Hatred, and shed abroad Purity and Peace, we are content to bear the Insults of others.

The Integrity and Innocence visible in your Conversations, will be *our Crown and our Rejoycing*.

Wou'd to God we were your *Servants* to these happy Purposes; that you wou'd let our Ministrations have this Effect on you! And you cannot refuse it when we address you *for the Sake of Christ*, of Him that dy'd for you, and urge all the kind Services of his Life, all the Sorrows of his last Hours, the Tears and Blood he shed for *your Sake*.

But whatever our Success be, it is a Satisfaction to think our *Services* if they are sincere, will be accepted. And in the whole Course of their Performance, we have this Consolation; that tho' we are the *Servants* of the People, we have not our Reward from them. If this were what we must depend on, God knows it wou'd be generally a poor one; we expect therefore Discouragement on this Head. But we are at the same Time *the Servants of Christ*; the only *Master* of us all, who will *not forget our Labour, and Service of Love* to the Souls of Men.

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It is what will animate to the greatest Faithfulness and Industry, our dear Brethren whom we are receiving into our Fellowship and Order.

And that all of us who are here in the sacred Office, may thus acquit our selves of the Duties of it, (as I am perswaded we shall have them advantageously press'd on us by a Reverend Father and Brother in the Ministry) and do this in good Conscience toward God, and without Scandal before Men, to their Edification and his Glory, God of his infinite Mercy grant thro' our Lord Jesus Christ, &c. Amen.

F I N I S.

